

Mariana Trench Monument Advisory Council (MTMAC)

September 4 (Hawaii)/5 (CNMI/Guam), 2012

Conference Call Meeting Minutes:

I) Call to Order

Meeting for the Mariana Trench Monument Advisory Council (MTMAC) called to order by Ben Sablan.

II) Attendance*

MTMAC members:

- 1) Mr. Ben Sablan – Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI),
- 2) Mr. Arnold Palacios - CNMI,
- 3) Dr. John Joyner - CNMI,
- 4) LCDR Morgan Roper – United States Costal Guard (USCG).

Supporting Federal agencies:

- 1) Ms. Susan White - United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS),
- 2) Ms. Laura Beauregard– USFWS,
- 3) Dr. Beth Flint – USFWS,
- 4) Ms. Lisa Croft – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) ,
- 5) Ms. Midori Akamine – NMFS, and
- 6) Ms. Heidi Hirsh-NMFS.

* 5th MTMAC member Mr. Roy Tsutsui – Department of Defense (DOD) was unable to attend

III) Inaugural meeting follow-up items

A. Minutes - June 5-6 meeting minutes were sent by Roy. Arnold asked if we can defer approval. The rest of the Advisory council agreed.

B. MTMAC questions re: Connaughton e-mail dated December 26, 2008.

Susan regrets to report that they do not have answers to all the questions. They have been submitted to the Department of Interior as a Decision Memo and also to USFWS.

Response is not complete for any of the questions yet but when it comes back to Susan it would be a joint response from Interior and USFWS. Many of the people involved in crafting the Proclamation are no longer there and so it is taking time to get this research done.

Ben asks what the timeline will be and Susan says it will probably take until the end of the year for the answers to be ready.

Lisa says that the questions have not been sent up through Department of Commerce yet. They are working on deciding the correct pathway and mechanism for answering the questions. They can also meet a deadline of the end of the year for the answers.

Susan suggests that this is a non-traditional method of asking this type of question within the Department, and that it would not be inappropriate for the Advisory Council to send their inquiry directly to the Secretaries.

Lisa concurs that it would be more appropriate for the letter to come from the MTMAC.

Arnold agrees that the MTMAC should ask the questions of Interior and Commerce.

MTMAC members agreed to send official letter of inquiry.

C. Opportunities to identify and track research - Susan reported that personnel at Department of State relayed that the database is closed except to authorized users. Therefore, the MTMAC would not have access. Susan can forward and summarize the permit requests she receives on a quarterly or biennial basis. She is currently reviewing the second of 6 requests. Others did not require a Special Use Permit (SUP). One SUP has been issued and another is under review.

Ben asks Susan to notify the MTMAC what these requests are.

D. Planning - At the inaugural meeting MTMAC members were asked to comment on the draft goals but to date FWS and NMFS have only received comments from DOD. The #3 planning update has on public meeting comments is being drafted.

Arnold asks if the Draft Goals could be sent to Todd Miller, Supervisory Wildlife biologist of Wildlife department in CNMI. Susan asked for his email address.

Heidi said that NMFS was still waiting for proposed non-commercial fishing regs from WESTPAC. The proposed regs were agreed upon by the Fisheries Council. There was a short discussion on possible changes to the proposed regs.

E. Public sharing funding opportunities - List was sent to MTMAC members. Heidi thanked USFWS for preparing the list and said she added the NOAA grant opportunities.

Links to Grant opportunities are also listed. Susan reminds group that CNMI agencies can pursue them but the Federal agencies cannot apply.

F. Guam Representation on MTMAC - Arnold reports CNMI & Guam Governors may discuss Guam membership on MTMAC before next face-to-face meeting.

G. 2013 planned Workshops - Future workshops coming up in CNMI are in two parts. In October the educators' workshop will be a precursor to the later workshop. It will cover an Introduction to why we explore (Human Health, Climate Change, + other reasons) and will be held on the CNMI Teachers State-wide Professional Development Day.

Council members ask for as much information about this as possible prior to meeting to try to be present for at least part of it.

Heidi waiting for confirmation about scheduling and space. Lisa said that Steve McKagen would be covering the Coral Watch program activities during that week.

H. Co-Management - John reports that the Governor re-iterated his unwavering definition of co-management as decision-making: the CNMI to have authority to make decisions about the plan, its facilitation, and the conduct of the plan. His position serves as a platform for CNMI's acceptance of the plan and participation in the council.

Lisa states that this is just what we expected. Heidi said that it will be important to get the language correct in the letter for the Secretaries. Ben asks John to have the letter ready for MTMAC members' review by the end of the week.

I. Item #6. Action from public comments -Solutions and status on visitor center.

Lisa suggested there could be a parallel process with USFWS pursuing it through Refuge system and NOAA could try and replicate an Ocean Center/Visitor Center, multipurpose center such as was visited in American Samoa.

Arnold reminds people that there was Congressional funding of \$200K to use for planning for a visitor center. The grant was site-specific to the lighthouse built in the '30's as Arnold thought it would be important to confirm suitability of the building before moving forward. They are in the first phase of this study. It should be done in next couple of months.

Arnold comments on history of the whole monument establishment. A visitor center was one of key selling points of the whole project to create a monument.

The \$200K was inadequate to get anywhere. It just will produce a report. We need a plan to move forward.

Lisa says that doing a NOAA ocean center won't preclude the USFWS from pursuing a refuge visitor center.

Lisa asks Arnold if still interested in a workshop. Arnold asked "what workshop?" A MPA workshop is being planned for the beginning of 2013 but she hasn't talked to Allen Tom recently. There will be a module in the workshop to help people understand differences between Monuments and Sanctuaries.

IV. New Business

A. John Joyner will be in Honolulu October 15 and would like to meet with Susan and Lisa.

B. Morgan – USCG has been increasing patrols and cutter presence in the Northern Islands. Ben and Arnold ask if there would be room for them to ride along. Morgan says there typically are not any extra berths so it will be hard to manage. If one opens up she will alert them.

V. Next meeting –

5 December, 9:00 a.m. (CNMI/Guam) , **4 December, 1:00 p.m.** (Hawaii)

Conference call, Heidi and Lisa will draft agenda for Ben's approval.